

## **National Consortium on SRI for India**

A consultative workshop and meeting to discuss and launch a **National Consortium on the System of Rice Intensification in India** was held on October 10, 2010, at the National Centre for Agricultural Economics and Policy Research (NCAP), jointly organized with the NGO PRADAN (Professional Assistance for Development Action). The workshop brought together actors leading SRI extension and research across India, participants from civil society organisations, researchers who have worked on SRI to understand the science behind its effectiveness, donors who have led the SRI movement in India, and newer stakeholders such as the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) which plans to invest in SRI promotion in several states of India.

The meeting was called to take forward some of the field-level initiatives and multi-stakeholder alliances at the state level to present a stronger case for mainstreaming SRI in national policies through a collaborative national consortium. The workshop's sub-title stressed 'innovations in food and income security' and began with opening remarks from the Director of NCAP, Dr Ramesh Chand, who expressed NCAP's interest in taking forward such collaborative efforts and requesting the members to reflect on possible ways of a faster spread of SRI.

Anil Verma from PRADAN shared his experiences of spreading SRI among small and marginal farmers in rainfed areas of Bihar, which was supplemented by insights from Anil Gautam of the Peoples Science Institute (PSI) on SRI and its extension to other crops such as wheat and finger millets in Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh. Dr. Pandian of TNAU reflected on the rapid spread of SRI in Tamil Nadu and on the experiences of the World Bank project on irrigation (IAMWARM) in which SRI has been integrated.

Ms. Bhagya Lakshmi from WASSAN (Watershed Support Services and Activities Network) spoke about the attempts to launch a state-level consortium to provide a boost to SRI activity in Andhra Pradesh that has had a lull in recent years. Dr. Mahender Kumar from the Directorate of Rice Research (DRR) indicated how research agencies can play a role in providing knowledge support to such state and national-level initiatives.

These presentations were followed by an overview of the first phase of work of the Sir Dorabji Tata Trust (SDTT) on SRI in twelve states of India with an outreach of 65,000 farmers, largely rainfed and small and marginal, and sketched plans for a greater outreach in the just-commenced second phase through closer collaboration with agencies such as NABARD. M .Vilaschandran from NABARD indicated that although NABARD is a relative novice with SRI, it intends to take SRI forward in 14 states of India in close collaboration with civil society organisations at the state level. The session was chaired by Dr. Biksham Gujja of the WWF-ICRISAT project, who encouraged members to identify policy advocacy ideas from their work and make projections for SRI at the national level.

There was a [lead presentation](#) by Dr. C. Shambu Prasad of the Xavier Institute of Management and Dr. B. C. Barah of NCAP on the nascent national consortium for SRI (NCS) to improve the current status of SRI spread through civil society organisations. They suggested a

draft mission statement for the consortium: ***“To enable India to provide global/international leadership on agroecological innovations that reduce agrarian distress by achieving enhanced farmer incomes through sustainable eco-friendly and resource- conserving (and enhancing) systems of crop intensification, through novel institutional mechanisms that build on farmers knowledge and enhance local capacities, with active participation of civil society, researchers and government agencies.”***

Participants were then divided into three working groups to reflect on the functions and role of the consortium, the structure and functioning of NCS and its secretariat, and strategies, approaches and proposed activities of the consortium. The reports of the subgroups were presented by Narendranath, Biswanath Sinha and T. M. Thiyagarajan respectively.

V. V. Sadamate, the advisor on agriculture from the Planning Commission, commended the work to bring together the various actors on SRI and encouraged the members to comment on how the Twelfth Five-Year Plan can take these ideas forward. Mukesh Khullar, the Director of the National Food Security Mission (NFSM), was unable to attend due to a last-minute official engagement and expressed his regret at this, but has since expressed NFSM’s interest in taking forward SRI. The meeting also discussed the idea of a national workshop on SRI in the month of December 2010, at either Hyderabad or Bhubaneswar. [This has been scheduled for December 21-22 in Hyderabad.]